

Stories from the Honour Boards

Stories of those who served and are remembered on the Honour Boards in the Merrington Anzac Memorial Peace Chapel at Saint Andrew's Uniting Church

Booklet Number 94

SELWYN ACKWORTH **PERCIVAL CLARKE** **1892 - 1936**



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

ART19766

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Please see a Guide if you would like a copy.

Cover Illustration:

Private Clarke travelled to Egypt on the Kyarra in November 1914.

On 6 November 1914 Kyarra was requisitioned and converted into a hospital ship (HMAT A.55 Kyarra) for the purpose of transporting Australian medical units to Egypt. The hull was painted white with a large red cross on the side. In March 1915, Kyarra was converted into a troop transport.

On 5 May 1918, Kyarra was sailing from Tilbury to Devonport to embark civilian passengers and take on full general cargo. However she was sunk by UB-57 near Swanage with the loss of six lives.

It was discovered in the late 1960s by a member of the Kingston and Elmbridge British Sub-Aqua Club, which later bought the wreck. The wreck, which lies one mile off Anvil Point, remains popular with divers.

(<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kyarra>)

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Corner Ann and Creek Streets
Brisbane QLD 4000
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Private Selwyn Ackworth Percival Clarke

Selwyn Ackworth Percival Clarke was born at South Brisbane on 6 May 1892, son of David James Clarke and Elizabeth Annie née Baker. Mr D J Clarke was a chemist with business premises in Finney's Old Building in Edward Street in the city. The family lived at Elsdah in Hobb Street, Auchenflower. Selwyn attended Brisbane Grammar School in 1909 and 1910 and later passed a preliminary pharmacy examination enabling him to be articled as a chemist's assistant in his father's pharmacy. On 24 September 1914, soon after the declaration of war, Selwyn Clarke at the age of 22 enlisted at Victoria Barracks in Brisbane to serve in the Australian Imperial Force. He was given an early regimental number 26 and appointed to First Australian General Hospital in the Royal Australian Medical Corps.

Private Clarke left Brisbane on 21 November 1914 on board HMAT *Kyarra* bound for Egypt. Just prior to the voyage the ship had been converted to a hospital ship for the purpose of transporting Australian medical units to Egypt. The hull was painted white with a large red cross on the side.

For nearly two years Private S A P Clarke was attached to Heliopolis Hospital carrying out duties at auxiliary hospitals at Ras-el-Tin, Abbassia and Mustapha. In February 1916 he was in hospital himself with influenza at Abbassia.



The Palace Hotel in Heliopolis, about 4½ miles west of Cairo, which had been re-purposed as the 1st Australian General Hospital.



Patients in the Heliopolis Hospital

On 15 September 1916 he embarked from Alexandria per hospital ship *SS Hertfordshire* and was transferred at Parkhouse Camp to the 8th Field Ambulance. On crossing to France in November 1916 he served with the 14th Field Ambulance carrying out dangerous duties in the field as a stretcher bearer. He was seriously wounded in action on 4 May 1917. Suffering gunshot wounds by high explosive shell to the thigh and buttocks, Private Clarke was transported to hospital in England and did not return to the Western Front. He embarked from London for return to Australia on board *Themistocles* on 3 January 1918. He was discharged from the AIF on 8 February 1918 in Brisbane, suffering from deafness in both ears. For his services in the Great War Private Selwyn Clarke was awarded the 1914/15 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

Australian electoral rolls of 1919 and 1922 show Selwyn Clarke living at Montura in Gladstone Road, South Brisbane when his occupation was pharmaceutical chemist. He might again have worked in his father's pharmacy though Mr D J Clarke senior died in December 1924 and Mrs Clarke his mother in 1927.

At some time later Selwyn Clarke moved to New Guinea where he was employed by the Public Health Department as a Medical Assistant at Enclowa Leprosarium at Kavieng. The leper colony housed 570 inmates including nearly 100 children. Appeals for "Christmas cheer for lepers" were advertised in Australian newspapers in the 1930s. It was said to be the only large leper colony in the Commonwealth Territories. Today the town of Kavieng is the capital of the Papua New Guinean province of New Ireland and the largest town on the island of the same name. The town is located at Balgai Bay, on the northern tip of the island. In 2009 Kavieng had a population of 17 248.

Selwyn Ackworth Percival Clarke died at Wau, a distance of 698 km by sea from Kavieng, on 17 October 1936, aged 44 years. At that time, gold discoveries surrounding the settlement at Wau were attracting large numbers of people but the cause of Selwyn Clarke's death there is not known.

References

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Compiled by Noel E Adsett

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Lest we forget